

§ 116-74.42. Principal Fellows Program established; administration.

(a) Program. – A Principal Fellows Program shall be administered by the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission in collaboration with the State Education Assistance Authority. The Principal Fellows Program shall provide up to a two-year scholarship loan to selected recipients and shall provide extracurricular enhancement activities for recipients. The North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission shall determine selection criteria, methods of selection, and shall select recipients to receive scholarship loans made under the Principal Fellows Program.

(a1) Trust Fund. – The Principal Fellows Trust Fund (Trust Fund) shall be an institutional trust fund established pursuant to G.S. 116-36.1. All funds appropriated to, or otherwise received by, the Principal Fellows Program for scholarships and other program purposes, all funds received as repayment of scholarship loans, and all interest earned on these funds shall be placed in the Trust Fund.

(a2) Use of Monies in the Trust Fund. – The monies in the Trust Fund may be used only for scholarship loans granted under the Principal Fellows Program, administrative costs, and costs associated with program operations in accordance with this Article. The Authority may use up to eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000) from the Trust Fund each fiscal year for (i) its administrative costs, including recovery of funds advanced under the program; (ii) the salary and benefits of the director of the program; (iii) the expenses of the Commission, including applicant recruitment; and (iv) funds provided to the Commission for program monitoring and evaluation and extracurricular enhancement activities for program recipients.

(b) Director. – The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall appoint a director of the Principal Fellows Program. The director shall chair and staff the Principal Fellows Commission, and shall administer the extracurricular enhancement activities of the program. The Board of Governors shall provide office space and clerical support staff for the program.

(c) Eligibility for Scholarship Loans. – The Principal Fellows Program shall provide a two-year scholarship loan in the amount specified in subsection (c1) of this section to persons who may be eligible to be selected as school administrators in the public schools of the State by completing a full-time program in school administration in an approved program. Approved programs are those chosen by the Commission from among school administrator programs within the State. No more than 200 principal fellow scholarship loan awards shall be made in each year. The final number of scholarship loan awards per year shall be made in accordance with the Board of Governors' findings concerning the supply and demand of administrators, the State's need for school administrator candidates and within funds appropriated for the scholarship loans. Effective September 1, 1995, and in accordance with school administrator training programs established by the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, recipients shall be required to complete an approved full-time academic program during the first year of the scholarship loan program and a full-time internship during the second year of the program. In order to attract fellows as interns, local school administrative units may use all or part of the funds allotted for an assistant principal salary for each intern accepted by the local school administrative unit; however, interns shall not serve as assistant principals.

(c1) Scholarship Loan Amount. – The scholarship loan shall be thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) per participant for the first year of participation. For the second year of participation, the amount of the scholarship loan per participant shall be sixty percent (60%) of the beginning salary for an assistant principal plus four thousand one hundred dollars (\$4,100) for tuition, fees, and books. The Commission may adjust the amount of the scholarship loan specified in this subsection to take into account increases in tuition, fees, and the cost of books, increases in the State principal assistant salary schedule, and changes in the stipend paid to participants in the program during the second year internship.

(d) Student Selection Criteria. – The Commission shall adopt stringent standards, which may include standardized test scores, undergraduate performance, job experience and performance, leadership and management abilities, and other standards deemed appropriate by the Commission, to ensure that only the best potential students receive scholarship loans under the Principal Fellows Program. The Commission shall consider the qualifications of all applicants fairly, regardless of gender or race, and shall consider the geographic diversity of the State. Scholarship loans under the Principal Fellows Program shall be awarded only to applicants who meet the standards set by the Commission, are domiciled in North Carolina, and who agree to work as school administrators in a North Carolina public school or at a school operated by the United States government in North Carolina upon completion of the two-year school administrator program supported by the loan.

(e) Program Selection. – The Commission shall develop and administer the Principal Fellows Program in cooperation with school administrator programs at institutions approved by the Commission. The Commission shall develop criteria and a process for the approval of campus program sites. Extracurricular enhancement activities shall be coordinated with each fellow's campus program and shall focus on the leadership development of program fellows.

(f) Review Committees. – The Commission may form regional review committees to assist it in identifying the best applicants for the program. The Commission and the review committees shall make an effort to identify and encourage women and minorities and others who may not otherwise consider a career in school administration to apply for the Principal Fellows Program.

(g) Administration of the Program. – Upon the naming of recipients of the scholarship loans by the Principal Fellows Commission, the Commission shall transfer to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) its decisions. The SEAA shall perform all of the administrative functions necessary to implement this Article, which functions shall include: rule making, dissemination of information, disbursement, receipt, liaison with participating educational institutions, determination of the acceptability of service repayment agreements, and all other functions necessary for the execution, payment, and enforcement of promissory notes required under this Article. (1993, c. 321, s. 85(a); 2006-66, ss. 9.16(a), (b); 2018-5, s. 10A.3(b).)